

where it is currently authorized, or potentially could be authorized, may have effects on values such as local community stability, rural lifestyle, open space protection, and so forth.

The analysis of uses forgone must detail the effects of the alternative actions with regard to the tradeoffs associated with decisions regarding permitted grazing or no grazing to the extent that those decisions preclude or restrict other resource uses and values.

There are some areas of land within the Forest that are not planned by a specific alternative to have permitted livestock grazing for various reasons. Areas such as developed campgrounds and administrative sites (except for administrative pack and saddle stock pastures) are not generally considered to be suitable for livestock grazing. There are also areas on the Forest where no livestock grazing allotments exist due to various administrative reasons such as conflicts with recreation, access limitations, etc. These areas are common to all action alternatives. Under the No Grazing alternative, all acres are considered to be unsuitable for livestock grazing during this planning cycle.

The economic analysis was completed from two perspectives: Financial efficiency and cost effectiveness. Financial considerations include only those revenues received by and costs incurred by the Forest Service. Economics considerations include the benefits and costs of grazing to all of society. Economically, actively grazed lands benefit society by providing food and fiber, and employment. These calculations do not include benefit or costs for which monetary values are unavailable.

Rangeland Capability Analysis

Rangeland Capability Analysis is described in the “Region II Desk Guide for Forest Planning”. The documentation of the process begins on page G.7 and the chapter originally used was dated July 12, 2001. The June 10, 2004 version was used in review between draft and final. Major headings in this document represent the steps defined above.

GIS was used to identify areas that met the following criteria. The best available data was used in making the determinations.

1. Begin with all lands within the project area that are National Forest System (NFS) lands.

The Land Status staff, located at the regional office, provided the land status data. They use a mix of public records and land survey data to maintain the forest ownership layer.

2. Subtract soil types that are dominated by a large percentage of rock outcrop and rubbleland, loose granitic or highly erosive soils, very wet and boggy soils, and sites with high mass movement risk. Optional - to identify erosive areas, a geologic layer to identify active landslides, slumps, etc. may be used.

Soil Survey indicated that soils dominated by a large percentage of

-rock outcrop and rubbleland in map units 10, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, and 36. We recognize that the soil survey lists relative percentages of rock outcrop and rubbleland in each map unit, and

we considered using only that percentage of each polygon as not capable. We chose not to do so because 1) this is not what the regional guide suggested, and 2) there was no way to know where spatially this percentage would reside within that polygon, a critical piece of information relative to subsequent analysis.

-loose granitic: The soil survey does not use this specific descriptor in either the narrative or the summary. For this exercise we assumed that “loose granitic” soils are addressed in the “rock outcrop and rubbleland” soils above.

-highly erosive soils: Soil survey lists series 24, 30, and 43 as having moderate to severe water erosion. It states that on severe soils (Leavitt, Waybe, Tongue River) “the hazard of erosion... requires careful grazing management”. It does not suggest that grazing should not occur, so no units were pulled out due to water erosion. Site-specific problem areas can be addressed, if present, in allotment planning.

-very wet and boggy soils: Soil survey summary lists only soil unit #16 as having wetness limitations due to “frequent flooding and poor drainage. Annual production is shown as 3000 – 3500 lb/acre. Since grazing could likely occur in these areas without accelerating erosion or other undesirable effects, these soils should not be considered “not capable or suitable” in this stage of the process. They may be identified, and problem areas can be addressed, in site specific planning.

-sites with high mass movement risk. Soil survey summary lists Soil Units 17, 29, and 30 as being characterized by some degree of “mass movement”. Soil association descriptions do not suggest that grazing should not occur or would create accelerated mass movement in these areas. Since grazing could likely occur in these areas without accelerating mass movement, these soils should not be considered “not capable or suitable” in this stage of the process. They may be identified, and problem areas can be addressed, in site specific planning.

A geologic layer identifying active landslides, slumps, etc. was not used to identify erosive areas. No such data is currently available, areas are known only anecdotally and they are few, and these can be more effectively identified in site specific planning. The landslide layer we have is for landslide hazard, and not the actual locations of slides.

3. Subtract soil types that are not inherently capable of producing more than 200 pounds of forage/acre within their Potential Natural Community (such as badland outcrops, nutrient-poor soils, shallow soils, or alkali salt flats). If a figure other than the “200 pounds per acre” is used, document the rationale.

Soil survey indicates that associations 13 and 37 produces less than 200 lb/acres forage. These were considered not capable. We recognized that CVU data could be used to identify areas that produced less than 200 lb/acre forage, but we felt double counting areas to be a risk. We chose to 1) follow process outlined by the regional guide, and 2) use soil survey data.